



FIRST CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

WELCOME to First Christian Assembly, an independent church whose mission is articulated by Jesus in Mark 16:15 when he said "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature". Following this great commission, First Christian Assembly preaches and teaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. In so doing, we trust that God, working through His Holy Spirit will draw souls to salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Religious Liberty?

A new report released by a prominent religious liberty advocacy organization claims that there has been a 133 percent increase in domestic "attacks on religious liberty" in the last five years and about a 15 percent increase in attacks on religious liberty in the last year.

The First Liberty Institute, a conservative legal group dedicated to defending people and organizations whose First Amendment rights have been violated, released its annual report, "Undeniable: The Survey of Hostility to Religion in America," on Tuesday.

The report highlights cases reported in the last few years in which Americans have had their religious liberty rights infringed or "attacked" in one way or another - either in the public arena, in the military, in schools or even within church walls.

"In this edition, the total number of documented incidents in this report increased by over 15 percent over the past year and now includes more than 1,400 religious liberty incidents," the report states. Compared to 2011, when there were 600 reported cases, the number of religious liberty incidents has increased by 133 percent. ***To deny that religious freedom is in crisis in America is to deny the obvious. And yet there are deniers. Ironically, they include those who launch the very attacks that have caused the crisis itself,*** the report explains.

"The American people, however, deserve the truth.

For that reason, every year a team of legal researchers at First Liberty Institute - led by a Harvard-trained constitutional attorney - investigates and documents the rise in the number and severity of domestic attacks on religion.

"The report's editor-in-chief, Justin Butterfield, said during a conference call with reporters Tuesday that the 15 percent increase in cases in 2017 is about the same as the year-to-year rate of increase seen in the past few years of reporting.

It's school cases, it's military cases, it's open public places cases, employment cases. Unfortunately, it is not [just] one particular area [of society], it's across the board. What we collect is just what's published. So really it is just the tip of the iceberg because what's published is really a fraction of what is actually happening," First Liberty CEO and Chief Counsel Kelly Shackelford said during the conference call. "Most people just take it. They don't call. They don't know there is a place they can get help. They don't have enough money to hire a legal team. What you see in 'Undeniable' is growing and showing that the ones that we can document are growing. (Report, Christian Post Online, 9/13/17).

Missionary Highlights

PNG

This week and last, five year old Tiger has been accompanying his grandmother, Ellen, and aunt, Rachel, sometimes Kia, and me during hospital and prison visitation. Tiger and Ellen and Rachel come regularly to the Friday afternoon kids' time at our apt. He loves Bible stories, loves singing, is a bit bossy at times, and is very excited to come to our apartment. On Fridays, he and his family sometimes sit at the gate for an hour waiting for the time to come in.

Well, he came today with us to the prison. When I asked those accompanying me who wanted to take a turn to pray at one particular cell, he insisted he did. I told him to "tok strong", meaning to pray loud. Well, Tiger prayed loud enough for God to hear him, but the prisoners and we shared by bowing our heads. He loved handing out tracts to the prisoners. Don't you just love it. He and his family had witnessed one of the prisoners killing a man who was in one of the cells we visited today. Imagine!

After my talk and our prayer at one particular cell, Kia told me one prisoner wanted to talk to me. The prisoner, Alex, shared that he was an enemy of God. I shared with him the plan of salvation and how he could be forgiven and reconciled to God. Then I asked him if he would like to do just that. He said he did, and we prayed. How wonderful to be a midwife at the spiritual rebirth of Alex.

Now, back to the Friday group, little Timothy came with a black eye. I was told someone threw a stone at him. He is about 2 or 3. Not sure. He does not usually know too much what to do when we have crafts, but this last Friday he participated with enthusiasm. We made little paper crosses with stickers on them for the hospital outreach. He colored a large number of them and showed me each one to get my approval. It was nice that he was not punching his brothers for a change.

You know, stone throwing here is so common it is almost not worth talking about. Parents throw them at their kids, adults at each other, and so on. Then there are the rock fights.

I praise God for some resources various persons in the US and here in PNG have provided for ministry. It is just amazing to be the one with the privilege of using them and distributing them.

Thank you to all of you for being such an important part of what goes on here.

Lois

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| First Christian Assembly, | 1900 S. 11 th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19148 | 215-389-6721 |
| First Christian So Jersey, | 123 Egg Harbor Rd. Sewell NJ 08080 | |
| Philadelphia Access Center, | 1832 S. 11 th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19148 | 215-389-1985 |

The Philadelphia Access Center is a ministry of First Christian Assembly. Our mission is *revealing Christ through compassionate service*. Services available at PAC include social services information and referrals, biblical counseling, support groups, volunteer training, and community outreach. All services are free of charge and available to anyone. To learn more, visit us in person (across the street from FCA) or online at www.philaccess.org or www.facebook.com/philaccess.

WEEKLY SERVICES /MEETINGS

| | Meets at FCA | Meets at PAC |
|-----------|---|--|
| Sunday | 9:45 AM <i>Bible Study – Phila -location</i> 10:00 AM <i>South Jersey Worship Service</i> 11:00 AM <i>Phila Location Worship Service & Children’s Sunday School</i> | |
| Monday | | 7:00 PM <i>Stepping Stones</i> |
| Tuesday | 6:30 PM <i>Prayer (Sanctuary)</i> 7:00 PM <i>Worship (Fellowship area)</i> | |
| Wednesday | | 1:00 PM <i>Women at the Well</i> 1:00 PM <i>Coram Deo</i> |
| Thursday | | 6:00 PM <i>Prayer Service</i> 7:00 PM <i>Bible Study</i> |
| Friday | | 7:00 PM <i>Right Path (on a hiatus)</i> |

- *Coram Deo*: A men’s Bible study and Christian fellowship.
- *Right Path*: A Christ centered support and recovery group for people whose lives have been affected by drug and alcohol addiction. In a warm and friendly atmosphere, we provide loving support and fellowship; in genuine confidential sharing, coupled with a Biblical twelve step model of recovery.
- *Stepping Stones*: A Christ centered support group for men and women impacted by a loved one’s addiction. In a warm and friendly atmosphere, we provide loving support, fellowship, confidential sharing, and intercessory prayer.
- *Women at the Well*: This group is Biblically based and promotes hope, healing, and fellowship for women impacted and struggling with brokenness.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- Ministries at First Christian (Phila.& NJ) and the Philadelphia Access Center
- Christians around the world being persecuted for their faith
- Our supported missionaries
- For our Pastor and his family
- Paula Grazulis
- Operation Christmas Child

“Religious liberty might be supposed to mean that everybody is free to discuss religion. In practice it means that hardly anybody is allowed to mention it.” G.K. Chesterton